

## *Justice Before History: Saying yes and no to politics at the same time*

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### **Abstract:**

During his lifetime and continuing today, Albert Camus has been criticized by many on the political left for constantly ending up by moralizing in his political essays. This has allowed his critics to claim that in spite of his Resistance experience, he was not sufficiently involved in history and constantly retreated from or positioned himself above history and politics in order to judge and condemn political excesses and violence from a pristine moral perspective. In order to assess the validity of such critiques, in this paper I will analyze the moral dimension of Albert Camus's political writings and attempt to understand the exact nature of his contradictory relation to history. I shall focus on what I argue are the critical effects of a political position that gives priority to the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of history over narrowly defined historical and political forces and any form of historical logic that projects a glorious end to history. Camus' position places human life first, before the struggle to achieve any political goal, no matter how noble. My paper argues that the political impact of such a position should not be underestimated or simply dismissed as a form of pious moralizing, since it has something essential to say about history and politics and what we are willing to accept and justify in the pursuit of justice and in the name of democracy.